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Letter dated 23 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to forward the attached text of a government statement issued by the Office of the President on Tuesday, 23 May 2000.

I would be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be issued as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Ibrahim M. **Kamara**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 23 May 2000 from the Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Government Statement
23 May 2000

The Government wishes it to be known that it has seen the press release issued by the Government of Liberia indicating that the Sierra Leone government forces are attacking the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) positions in our country. This is not true. The Government further wishes to make it known that it has only been defending its positions and that in defending the position of its forces, it has used the defensive strategy of taking over any position from which an attack has been launched on the position of its forces in order to neutralize the capacity of the enemy to continue attacking from that position.

The Government does not therefore see the connection between defending the positions of its forces and the release of the United Nations peacekeepers who were illegally abducted. It should be recalled that the Heads of State of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and indeed the entire international community at large, had indicated that there should be no precondition for the release of United Nations peacekeepers, who are to be released without delay. This global position was indeed endorsed by President Charles Taylor of Liberia at a recent ECOWAS summit in Abuja.

The Government of Sierra Leone wishes to acknowledge the positive role which President Taylor has already played in securing the release of some of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone hostages.

It is the wish of the Government to continue to cooperate in whatever way possible with President Taylor to ensure that he carries out fully the mandate entrusted to him by the ECOWAS Heads of State with the hope that lasting peace will finally return to Sierra Leone, the Mano River Union and the west African subregion.